



Office of the County Executive
Monroe County, New York

Maggie Brooks
County Executive

October 12, 2004

To The Honorable
Monroe County Legislature
39 West Main Street
Room 407
Rochester, New York 14614

Honorable Legislators:

I am submitting for your review and approval the proposed 2005 Annual Operating Budget for Monroe County.

This is the first budget that I am submitting as County Executive. In doing so, I am offering my vision of Monroe County's priorities for the upcoming year – and a plan that will begin to position us to achieve our mutual goal of structural financial balance.

This budget keeps faith with the taxpayers of our community. The property tax rate for Monroe County is held flat. At \$9.10, it is the same rate that this legislative body set for 2004.

This budget is balanced and fiscally responsible. It is a reasonable plan that will continue to fund important programs and services throughout 2005 – and it will do so without incurring a deficit.

This budget increases total County spending by \$12.8 million, or 1.3 percent. However, it actually cuts non-mandated County spending, the portion of the budget that you and I actually control, by \$1 million.

This budget reduces the County workforce by abolishing 162 positions but does so without cutting services to our constituents.

And, although recently enacted state pension relief allows county governments to avoid making payments to the retirement system next year, effectively delaying our 2005 payment until the 2006 budget year, this budget sets aside \$12.3 million for this purpose. This represents approximately two-thirds of the anticipated payment due in 2006. To do otherwise would simply postpone the inevitable and make a balanced budget in 2006 that much harder to achieve. Clearly, this is the fiscally responsible approach.

The budget that I am submitting implements 20 recommendations of the Monroe County Budget Advisory Team's report: *From Crisis to Stability*. They include: multi-year budget forecasting; separate budgets for elected officials; increased use of the Mill Seat Landfill; enhanced social services case management; increased revenue opportunities through a newly created grants office; debt restructuring; operational consolidations; workforce reductions; and, outsourcing.

In 2005, we have budgeted \$151.3 million for Monroe County's local share of Medicaid. That is \$31.4 million more than Monroe County is projected to collect in sales tax revenue in 2005. It is \$17 million more than was budgeted in 2004. It is 52 percent more than was spent in the year 2000. And, it is a 100 percent mandated cost to Monroe County.

Mandated spending is an enormous expense to Monroe County and our taxpayers. In 2005, mandated spending accounts for 78.6 percent of the entire County Budget. Mandated spending is unpredictable, it is difficult to manage and is, by any measure, the largest single obstacle to achieving our goal of structural financial balance.

We will continue to lobby the State and Federal governments to provide counties with meaningful mandate relief. We will also continue our collaborative efforts to apply pressure for change, through the New York State Association of Counties, my fellow county executives, and state and local business associations.

The 2005 Monroe County Budget is a fair proposal that does not contain draconian cuts, does not call for massive lay-offs, and does not pit the County against the City or communities against each other. This is a budget that our community can be proud of.

This budget contains reasonable cost-cutting initiatives that put taxpayers first, including:

- Creation of a new public works agency, which will incorporate the Departments of Environmental Services, Transportation and Parks. These individual departments each have a similar workforce with similar functions. The new agency will now have a more responsive and flexible workforce that can be deployed without regard to jurisdictional limitations. Creating this new agency will result in a net savings of \$1 million for Monroe County;
- Elimination of the County's print shop, which will result in a net savings of nearly \$200,000. Through competitive bidding, County government will now meet its printing needs by contracting with printing firms located throughout our community;
- Consolidation of services by Monroe County and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, which includes fleet maintenance services, resulting in a \$250,000 savings, and information technology services, resulting in a savings of \$350,000;
- In-sourcing of Monroe County's foster care responsibilities. Currently, Monroe County employs caseworkers who determine foster care eligibility, an obligation required by State Law. The County also contracts with several local agencies for foster care case management. These agencies also employ caseworkers to perform this function. Monroe County will now assume full operational responsibility for Foster Care – from determining eligibility to managing on-going cases. We will create 21 new positions to fully staff this program, ourselves. Monroe County will save \$1.2 million as a result.

I am proud that the budget I am submitting for 2005 is deficit-free. However, the multi-year budget forecast, which is included in this budget proposal, clearly shows that we still have much work to do and many tough choices to make in order to bring Monroe County into lasting structural balance.

My vision for this community extends beyond stable property taxes. We need to re-establish a positive fund balance to ensure continued tax and service stability, we must increase the economic vitality of our community and we must protect the quality of life amenities that make people want to move here, live here and stay here.

I believe the 2005 Monroe County Budget is an excellent starting point. It sets the right tone and it points us in the right direction. Working together, we can continue to find opportunities to improve our financial condition throughout the next twelve months, which will keep Monroe County on track toward realizing our mutual goal of long-term fiscal stability.

Sincerely,



Maggie Brooks
Monroe County Executive

